

Nutrient Management News

To: Newsroom Directors and Assignment Editors

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Contact:
DE Dept. of Agriculture

Anne Fitzgerald
800.282.8685 (DE
only) 302.698.4520
302.242.4092 (Cell)

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**DE Dept of Natural
Resources and Environmental
Control**

Melinda Carl
302.739.9902
302.632.1078 (Cell)

University of Delaware

Katy O'Connell
302.831.1355
302.535.7569 (Cell)

Mountaire Farms, Inc.

Roger Marino
302.934-3123

Nutrient management progress announced

Today, the Delaware Nutrient Management Commission, State agencies, the University of Delaware, Delmarva Poultry companies, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service announced significant progress made in their cooperative efforts to improve Delaware's water quality and other environmental initiatives. According to Bill Vanderwende, Chairman of the Nutrient Management Commission, progress has been made in reductions in phosphorous in poultry litter, nutrient management certification and continuing education, and the overall nutrient mass balance in the State of Delaware. Highlights of presentations follow:

State Agencies:

- Michael Scuse, secretary of the Delaware Department of Agriculture (DDA), spoke about the *Delaware Way* of problem solving and thanked all the partners who have participated in building a successful nutrient management program. Scuse said, "As the Minner Administration moves through its final year, I know that I can speak for Governor Minner and say that the accomplishments detailed here today represent some of our finest hours in the pursuit of environmental quality for a more *Livable Delaware*."
- "The agricultural industry deserves credit for the nutrient load reductions that have been realized from various best management practices," said John A. Hughes, secretary of the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control. "We're happy to provide funding for the practices implemented by the agricultural community, which, in addition to being extraordinarily successful, are very cost-effective compared to other ways of reducing nutrient loads to our environment."
- In an overview of the 2007 Nutrient Management Annual Report, Bill Rohrer, program administrator, outlined the strategic elements needed to implement the Nutrient Management Law, including comprehensive education of nutrient handlers by certification, public and private nutrient consultants to assist in nutrient management plan development, alternative use projects for surplus poultry litter and compliance assistance.

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Among the 2007 Program accomplishments Rohrer noted are the following:

- 92,157 tons of excess poultry litter was relocated to alternative use projects;
- 355,984 acres of nutrient applied farmland was managed under a current nutrient management plan with assistance from the program;
- Allen's, Mountaire and Perdue poultry companies provided compliance assistance to contracted growers by funding, environmental assessments, alternatives for poultry litter and more;
- The program resolved forty four nutrient management compliance complaints with only one resulting in an enforcement and penalty action;
- Twelve farms managed under an EPA CAFO permit administered by the Nutrient Management Program;

Delmarva Poultry Companies:

- Bill Massey, director of housing, Mountaire Farms, Inc. discussed his company's *On Farm Environmental Assessments Program*, which illustrates the Delmarva poultry companies' commitment to environmental stewardship. Massey said, "The ultimate goal of our program is to offer continued stewardship of the environment. Mountaire has completed environmental assessments on all of their farms, but we all know that this is a continuing process for the present and the future."

University of Delaware:

For over thirty years the University of Delaware (UD) has conducted basic and applied research about nutrient management. Over the past ten years, UD has worked extensively with the Delaware Nutrient Management Commission and its partners to implement research based recommendations for Delaware agriculture.

- Jan Seitz, associate dean for extension and outreach for the UD College of Agriculture and Natural Resources and director of UD's Cooperative Extension, said, "We are pleased to continue working with the Department of Agriculture and DNREC to conduct research and demonstration projects, provide technical recommendations, and conduct nutrient management training programs."
- William Saylor, PhD, professor of poultry nutrition at the University of Delaware, discussed research conducted by the University and others to modify poultry diets to reduce the amount of phosphorus in poultry litter. Phytase is an enzyme that helps chickens utilize more of the indigestible phosphorus in grains, and therefore decrease the amount of supplemental phosphorus that must be added to the feed. Saylor said, "Phytase use has been embraced by the poultry industry in Delaware and on the Delmarva Peninsula and is included in the feeds of nearly, if not all, of the broilers reared here." The reductions result in thousands of tons of phosphorus removed from broiler feeds with corresponding reductions in poultry litter.
- Dave Hansen, PhD, associate professor of soil and environmental quality, extension nutrient management specialist, and the Ag Program Leader for University of Delaware Cooperative Extension provided an update on the status of UD's involvement in nutrient management training, education, and certification. Hansen said, "Since 2001, more than 2,600 individuals have attended nutrient management certification classes. Maintaining certification requires continuing education and since February 2004, Cooperative Extension has been an integral part of more than 260 different continuing education programs offering more than 700 credits. Our field research and demonstration projects, which are an important part of the education effort, have included sites on more than 150 farmers' fields in the past five years."

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- Tom Sims, PhD, associate dean for academic programs and research and a professor of soil and environmental chemistry, gave an overview of a recent report “Nutrient Mass Balances for the State of Delaware 1996 to 2006” submitted to the Delaware Nutrient Management Commission by researchers at the universities of Delaware, Maryland, and Florida. The report documents how efforts to improved agricultural nutrient management, particularly since the passage of the 1999 Delaware Nutrient Management Act, have affected statewide and county-level mass balances of nitrogen and phosphorous. Sims said, “The report notes that although nutrient surpluses have existed in Delaware and continue today, surpluses have decreased over the past 11 years. These trends suggest that nutrient management programs are reducing nutrient surpluses which should lead to lower nitrogen and phosphorous losses to air and water.” He added, “Continued efforts to improve nutrient management are essential to future success.”

Today’s host was the Clark family that owns and operates Woodsedge Farm near Kenton, Delaware. Woodsedge Farm has a 200,000 bird capacity. The operators grow birds for Mountaire Farms. In his opening remarks, Bill Vanderwende congratulated the Clarks on their excellent stewardship.



Presentations and other Nutrient Management information can be found under *Hot Topics* on the DDA website: www.dda.delaware.gov

